

# CREATING FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

*The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: Families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life ... The research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.<sup>1</sup>*

Partnerships are key to the success of today's children in the classroom. While schools in Kansas continue to work hard to provide all children with quality instruction in a nurturing environment, they cannot do it alone. The education and well-being of today's children is a shared responsibility between families, schools, community organizations, faith institutes, and many more. More than 40 years of research indicates that when families, schools, and communities work together to build partnerships, children are more successful.

Each community in Kansas is unique, with diverse cultures, ethnicities, and languages. In addition, the state's rural, frontier, and urban settings provide both opportunities and challenges for strong partnerships. Family, school, and community partnerships are built upon relationships. When relationships are established, schools and families can work together to identify the needs of families in the local community in order to provide a healthy, safe and strong learning environment.

In 2008, the Kansas State Board of Education endorsed the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.<sup>2</sup> These standards are designed to help educators and program administrators incorporate families into their child's education. The six standards are as follows:

1. Welcoming All Families in the School Community
2. Communicating Effectively
3. Supporting Student Success
4. Speaking up for Every Child
5. Sharing Power
6. Collaborating With Community

*More detailed information may be found on the [National PTA website](#).*

## **Federal Law**

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act,<sup>3</sup> which serves as the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), parental involvement means:

The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

- (A) That parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning;
- (B) That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school;
- (C) That parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- (D) The carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1116.

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) also focuses on enhancing parent involvement in our schools.<sup>4</sup> The following information highlights the benefits schools can derive from partnering and strategies for implementation.

## **Why Partner?**

- Partnership and student academic achievement are closely linked.
- Partnerships help build and sustain public support for schools.
- Families and the community can help schools overcome the challenges they face.
- Teachers can benefit from parent and community partnerships.
- The Every Student Succeeds Act provides partnership opportunities that can help schools meet the requirements of the law.

### ***Partnerships Strategies***

- Welcome parents into the school
- Post friendly signs (in all languages)
- Designate parking spots for parents and visitors
- Use positive, friendly greetings among all staff
- Make connections with families via e-mail, phone calls, or home visits
- Host a “Welcome Night” at the beginning of the school year

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- Assign “buddies” for new students, their families, and new staff
- Make the school feel warm and friendly
- Make sure all staff are accessible
- Consider smaller events for families (e.g., class meetings, grade-level socials, book groups, clubs, one-to-one interactions, open library nights)
- Honor families by recognizing their strengths and contributions
  - ✓ Adopt a partnership philosophy
  - ✓ Embrace the families
  - ✓ Listen and respond to the families
  - ✓ Set ground rules for involvement
  - ✓ Make parent-teacher conferences family-friendly
  - ✓ Accentuate the positive
- Connect with families through a focus on the children and their learning
  - ✓ Enhance families’ confidence
  - ✓ Consider home visits
  - ✓ Show parents that staff care about their children
  - ✓ Establish a family center
  - ✓ Send out a school newsletter
  - ✓ Arrange classroom visits
  - ✓ Set up volunteering opportunities in the classroom
  - ✓ Offer family learning activities
  - ✓ Invite community family partners to share ideas

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: SEDL.
- <sup>2</sup> National PTA. (n.d.). National standards for family-school partnerships [Webpage]. Retrieved from <http://www.pta.org/nationalstandards>
- <sup>3</sup> Every Student Succeeds Act, S.1177 (2015); Section 8101(39).
- <sup>4</sup> Individuals With Disabilities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004). Title I, Section 601(5B).

## Resources

- **Department of Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships**  
<http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>
- **Videos for Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships**  
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/face/framework.html>
- **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): Effective Family Engagement Principles**  
<http://www.naeyc.org/familyengagement>
- **Kansas State Department of Education**  
<http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/FactSheets/FactSheet-TitleI-ParentInvolvement.pdf>
- **Kansas Parent Information Resource Center**  
<http://www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc>
- **National Association for Family-School-Community Engagement (NAFSCE)**  
<http://www.nafsce.org>
- **National PTA**  
<http://www.pta.org/>
- **John Hopkins National Network of Partnership Schools**  
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/research.htm>
- **Nebraska Department of Education**  
[http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/pubs/pri\\_pro/Partnerships.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/pubs/pri_pro/Partnerships.pdf)
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**  
[http://www.pbis.org/family/family\\_partnership.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/family/family_partnership.aspx)
- Henderson, Anne T., Mapp, Karen L., Johnson, Vivian R., & Davies, D. (2007). ***Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships***. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Byrk, A. S., Sebring Bender, P., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. A. (2010). ***Organizing schools for improvement***. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.